



Midair and Near-Midair Events

*In the last eight years,
midair collisions have cost the Navy
and Marine Corps
more than \$795 million.*

By ACCS(AW/SW) Fredda Bryan

While midair collisions are costly to naval aviation, we first need to focus on the many near-midair collisions (NMACs) to prevent situations that lead to actual collisions.

The Naval Aviation Safety Program (OPNAVINST 3750.6R CH-2) says, “A NMAC occurs when aircraft pass close-by one another in the air and, as a result, the pilot-in-command feels the safety of the aircraft or UAV is in jeopardy.”

This criteria is used to determine when a NMAC should be reported:

- “A collision was avoided by chance, rather than by a conscious act on the part of the pilot.
- “A collision would have occurred had no action been taken.
- “Two aircraft inadvertently passed within 500 feet of each other.”

The OPNAV 3750 further states, “Pilots involved in a near-midair collision must:

- “Report the incident by radio to an FAA air-traffic facility or flight-service station. Inform them you will file a written NMAC hazard report.
- “At the next point of landing, contact the near-

est FAA air-traffic facility or flight-service station and report the incident. Inform them you will file a written NMAC report.

- “Under this instruction, file a written, formal hazard report.”

The final approach, touchdown, takeoff, and initial climb to the first turn away from the airfield are considered to be the most critical phases of flight for NMACs. A review of the causal factors for midairs and NMACs reveal that failure to adhere to procedures, directions, and/or instructions; poor or incomplete communications; poor coordination; complacency; bad scanning techniques; and failure to adequately train or supervise personnel are cited most often. The loss of situational awareness, though, is the No. 1 causal factor.

Are all NMACs reported? I would say “no.” One of the most common findings we identify during safety surveys is the underreporting of these events. When we receive calls asking whether a certain situation needs to be reported, our response is usually “yes.” A report results in the command reviewing their procedures, which prompts other commands to do the same. 🦅

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